

" 'Tis the time's play when madmen lead the blind."

Shakespeare.

SIR,

HAVING, this moment, read over your address to Sir Richard Hill, the gauntlet, which you, as the redoubtable advocate for Mr. William Hill and his Noble brother, have so magnanimously thrown into the field of contest. What reference, the *latin*, with which you have decorated your Squib, can have to the subject of it, requires explanation from you. To me, the nightly and daily expansion of *black Pluto's gate*, appears applicable only to the houses of conviviality, where bacchanalian guests are suffered to riot in excess, and as votaries of the *rosy god*, are, afterwards, sent home in *fish carts*, lest they should break their necks before the day of election. Potent in mind and limb, they enter the public houses. But *revocare gradum* to recover their steps or get back again, *hoc opus hic labor est*, there lies the difficulty. When the fumes of Bacchus ascend to the region of the *brain*, the preponderation is so great, as to leave the *heels* no longer in possession of their erect posture or elastic operation. The whole frame then totters, like a bad cause, of which *Bacchus*, *Plutus*, and *Pluto*, are the supporters; for, truth, freedom, and temperance, reject it with disdain. And what reference this can have to the two brothers now in *London*, whose mansions are shut, and whose houses of hospitality in *Shrewsbury* have not been for a long time open, must be left to the decision of those whose peace has been very lately disturbed at a late hour, by the clamorous and intoxicated votaries of the drunken god. But, perhaps, your *latin* frontis-piece is intended as the language of your *benevolence*, which prompts you to send a certain Baronet to the infernal regions, out of—*burning charity*.

The rest of your paper, written, rather to shew that you *would*, than that you *could* write, is made up of a variety of positive assertions without argument or connection. Your premises are mere gratuitous assumptions, and your conclusions break every rule of logic. You anticipate victory, even before the battle has been fairly fought, and erect your trophies over an adversary whom you have not yet dared to *face*. Your favourite banner is a *mask*; your weapons, those of calumny and defamation; and your shouts of triumph, the expiring pangs of disappointed ambition.

You say "the charges against Sir R. are perpetuated in an elaborate pamphlet." But is not the *vindication* of his character equally perpetuated? The number of *pages* is a point not worthy of consideration; since a falsehood may be comprised in a single sentence which it may sometimes require even a volume to confute. The question is, Are the charges substantiated? or, is the Vindication complete? The latter pleads in its favour the character of the party aspersed, the decisions of a Court of judicature, the opinion of Judge and Counsel, and the sentiments of disinterested friendship. Of some branches of this plea, you, probably, know nothing; others you cannot contradict; others you overlook; and yet all of them you presume to overturn. But, upon what ground? Why upon that of a pamphlet, which the public have not as yet seen, and the opinion of a masked libeller, whose aim, is, to pre-judge without proof, and to condemn without a trial. The mountain has been long in travail. All the gasconade of preparatory encomiums and stale advertisements, has been practised, to raise expectation; and many hands, it seems, employed in mid-wiving it into existence. Whether we shall stare with surprize, shrink into nothing through fright, or burst into laughter with contempt, when all the *men-midwives* have performed the *Cæsarian operation* on the poor groaning mountain, the issue only can determine. Attention begins to yawn. We are to have it soon roused, it seems, by the sight of the long-expected production. Some will, probably, be tempted, not only to look it in the face, but even to pursue and pluck the *goose* that has taken refuge between the legs of the A*** *Jupiter*†. We have no fears, though *Fidelis* and the "Looker-on" may wish to excite them.

Your *first* paragraph is not sense; your *second*, "a work of supererogation;" your *third*, a diffuse and idle repetition of the first, with compliments which a man of sense will despise, as well as the censure which invidiously retracts them; and your *fourth*, is the language of a necromancer, who talks of our having "conjured up a *fiend*, which it will exceed the limits of our "power to lay." That *Fidelis* is "a *fiend*" of the most malignant complexion, and that the "Looker-on" is his companion in defamation, or *Fidelis* himself, under a different signature, we admit. But that it is not in our power to "lay" this fiend remains to be proved. A certain charm, probably first elicited him from the mansions of stygian darkness; and a similar one more potent in operation would, probably, fascinate him back again. But, this sort of conjuration, though it may answer the purpose of an election-bubble, can never subserve the cause of truth; and in our debate, it is not length of purse, but strength of argument, that must "*lay the FIEND*."

† See the Fable.

SHREWSBURY,
February 29, 1796.

F. F. D. L.